

IAS Study Plan for Beginners

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The UPSC civil services exam is taken by lakhs of people in the country every year. It is a three-stage exam which when assailed will get you your ticket into a career in the illustrious Indian civil services. The UPSC exam is considered one of the toughest in India because of multifarious factors – the rather large UPSC syllabus, the intense competition, the eclectic nature of the subjects involved and also the unpredictability attributed to the UPSC papers. On an average, a candidate takes three attempts to clear the **IAS exam**. There are some of course, who have been able to do so in their maiden attempts itself. If you are a newbie to the civil services exam world, you would have to be a little extra attentive to certain things, if you are serious about your IAS aspirations. In this article, you can read about a general IAS study plan for beginners – ideally, fresh college graduates who are not working and are fulltime preparing for the exam.

Pre-preparation work

Before you commence your IAS preparation, you must do a few things. They are:

1. Be thorough with the **UPSC syllabus**. You can download it from [here](#). The UPSC syllabus is considered the bible of the exam and you may rest assured that a comprehensive knowledge of the syllabus' contents will make your IAS journey quite comfortable.
2. Get the UPSC exam dates. The **2018 UPSC exam schedule** is out. Grab a copy of it and mark it in red on your calendar.
3. Be clear of the UPSC format and pattern. [Read more](#).
4. Prepare yourself mentally for a rollercoaster ride that will leave you a changed person. Be prepared for hard work, smart work, test practices, a lot of reading, writing answers, etc. You must also be ready to reduce the number of hours you socialise and wile away watching mindless television. You shouldn't totally stop these activities and become a hermit for that would be quite detrimental. However, studies must take top priority if you want to clear the IAS exam.

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A lot of people start their preparation with the UPSC prelims and ignore the mains until after they take the prelims exam. This might help you clear the prelims but this plan would backfire since there is not much time between the prelims and the mains to start afresh after the prelims. Moreover, the syllabi for both have quite an overlap and it is only the test practice which is different. Since the prelims involves MCQs you need to practice for those.

So, it is best to have an **integrated approach** to the UPSC CSE wherein you start preparation for both IAS prelims and mains simultaneously.

As beginners, you are recommended to **start preparation with the basic books**. The NCERTs are the preferred choice when it comes to the IAS exam. These books have a clear and simple language. They are easy to understand. In addition, the information contained here is authentic, so you can safely use it for facts. In case multiple books give contradictory information, you should stick to the NCERT version.

You can see the [list of NCERT books to read for IAS exam here](#).

When should I start my IAS preparation?

Beginners should ideally get at least 10 – 12 months before the UPSC prelims exam for preparation. You can comprehensively cover the syllabus and have enough test practice only then. You should start with the common GS papers before moving on to the optional papers. But before the UPSC prelims exam, you should have completed at least 75% of your mains GS syllabus and at least 50% of your optional subject syllabus. Remember also to study for the CSAT paper. In case your academic background makes it easier for you to score in CSAT, you need only practice a few test papers a month before the prelims. In case you are not comfortable with CSAT, you should spend at least 2 months for the same. In any case, the CSAT is qualifying in nature and your target should be to just clear it.

Study exclusively for prelims

Two months before the prelims exam, you should dedicate your studies just for the prelims. Focus on how to manage time with 100 questions. Also learn how to avoid negative marking by intelligent guess work. Don't worry about the mains now since what you study will be useful for the mains also, but your focus should be on solving MCQs.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current affairs is perhaps the trickiest part of the IAS exam. This is because the examiner can ask anything under this banner. But don't fret. The UPSC might be unpredictable, but there is a method in this madness. When you read your daily newspapers (which is your No. 1 source for current affairs), you should relate what you read to the UPSC syllabus. You should compile current affairs notes as and when you read the papers. You can always rely on BYJU'S Comprehensive News Analysis CNA for the best and the most complete daily news compilation for the UPSC exam. Our experts go through several important news sources and provide you with important news analysis neatly categorised under sections. You will also have practice questions for both prelims and mains. Check out [BYJU'S CNA](#).

The most important tip for beginners

Freshers have two inherent disadvantages. One is the inexperience and the natural fear and anxiety that come with it. The second disadvantage is the tendency to take it lightly since you have more attempts and age on your side. Complacency is to be replaced with measured confidence. And fear is to be overcome with practice, practice and some more practice.

All the best!